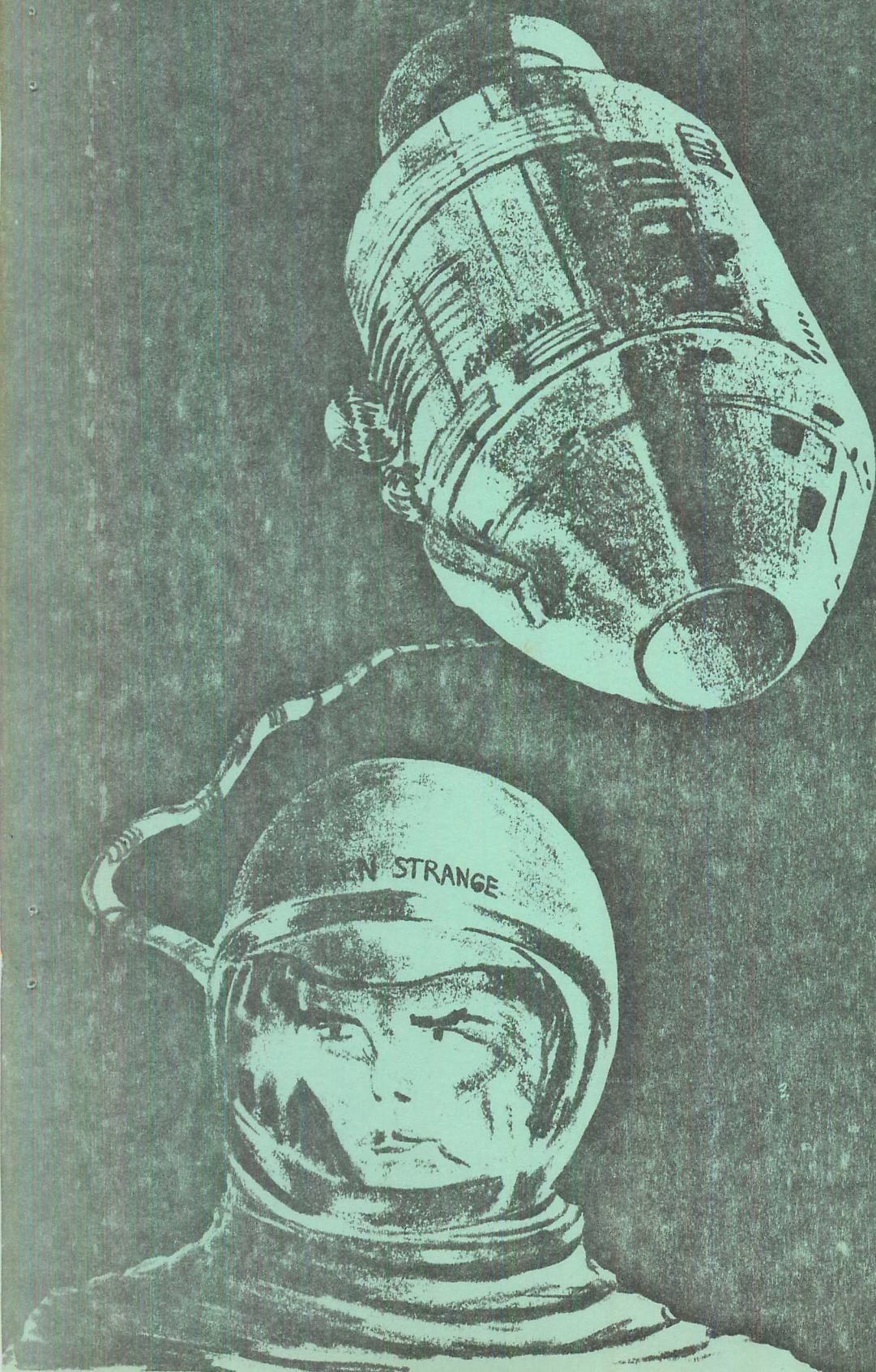


# LANZ'S LANTERN 3



Greg  
Frederick





# LAN'S LANTERN \*3

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### ARTWORK:

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Preston Smart --- p.6  
Jamie Collins --- p.11  
Christopher Loving --- p.16  
George Laskowski --- pp.8,9,10,13,  
15,18,20,22, inside front cover

DEDICATED TO: the members of the Science  
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ward Bound program; in particilar ---  
Charles Bingley, Mike Parizon, Lyle Gard-  
ner, David Richard, Vince Mosley, Mike  
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# FROM THE EDITOR...

"So it's about time you put out another issue," I hear you all cry. Well, it has been one busy summer and year, and I finally got around to putting this thing all together, and scraped up enough money to get it properly duplicated.

So there! This is done.

Maybe a bit of explanation is in order as to why this is a fiction issue. During this past summer I had the pleasure of completing my requirements for teaching certification, and I taught, in addition to Latin and Math, two Science Fiction classes. As time progressed during the summer, I had the boys write some stories. These are the results. They range from mediocre (involving time-worn plots) to very good. All have been edited by me in some way -- spelling, grammatical errors, transistions, etc., --- but they are essentially the same stories submitted to me by my students (and by Barry Levine's students, --- Barry taught another SF class). Some of the stories I rejected; the writing was poor, and I didn't want to embarrass the students.

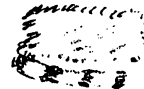
Here you have it, something of what I did on my summer vacation.

"But what about the Joe Haldeman interview we've been hearing about?" I hear you shout at me. Look for it in the next issue, which (I hope) will follow very shortly. I am on Christmas break now, and have time to work on it. Also, in LL #4, look for all those letters I've received on number 2, and hopefully reviews by Mark Leeper, Mark Bernstein and Greg Frederick (and anyone else I can rope into doing something).

So take care all, and I'll see you nextish. The best to you for the New Year.

*Lan*

Lan 21 Dec 76





# RAGE

It all started many years ago. I was attacked, as odd as it may seem, by a vampire. I was saved by Christopher Smith, a good friend of mine, when he stabbed the vampire from the back to the heart.

I am writing these words while my mind is sane, but when night falls I shall become the thing I hate most in life --- a vampire! I'll become a blood-thirsty vampire, thriving on other people's blood. And who knows, it may be Christopher's turn to be the donor.

Night is falling. I can't keep writing for long. I will stop writing now, before I change.

By the time I finished that phrase I was a vampire, lusting for blood. I stalked out onto the patio, my teeth dry. I knew I had to do something quick or else.

I saw a man and woman walking down the alley. I watched them like a leopard waiting for the right moment. That moment came! I had to kill them. I jumped on top of them. I strangled the man and beat the woman to death.

I had a good amount of blood in me then, but I knew it wouldn't last me but a night or two.

I crawled back into my coffin.

## II

When I awoke I finished the letter I had started. It ended with "please help me. I can't go on like this." I mailed it at the nearest post box while I still had time (before I changed). When I got back, it was getting dark. I had to do something or more people would get killed.

It was dark. My blood level had dropped tremendously. I could stay sane only one night more, then back to the terrible pain and aging, like my insides shrinking.

The day had passed. I was feeling weak, waiting for Dr. Freedman, the man to whom I had mailed the letter. I could feel my insides tightening. I had to have more blood. I knew Dr. Freedman was coming, so I would make him my victim.

I waited for him. When he came in I pounced on him. He drew out a crucifix and I screamed in pain. He placed the cross on my forehead and I could feel it burning into my brain. Quickly he pulled out a wooden stake. He stabbed me in the heart, and like the gods of inferno were punishing me, I ran with pain till I died. The thing I was praying for finally happened. I died, but before I died I ran with rage.

Lyle Gardner

# A TALE IN TIME

June 5, 1965:

Professor Xavier Blume is working on his time machine to show to a group of professors at a university in Germany.

Dr. Blume is an aging man with a heart condition. His assistant is Max. Max is a dwarf and has a mental disorder, but the doctor has noticed that he has a very high electric brain-wave pattern, even though Max is somewhat retarded. The only assistance that Max is to give is to play the human guinea pig for Blume's experiment.

September 8, 1965:

Professor Blume has finished his time machine and is going through a series of tests on the menacing-looking machine. Max is also going through a number of strenuous tests to see if his brain can withstand the tremendous stress and strain of electricity to the brain.

September 9, 1965:

The time has come for the ultimate test. Max is set inside the machine. Time is delayed for the professor to get started and to set up his own controls. Within three or four hours Blume is ready, and so is Max.

The machine is turned on and a very loud scream is heard from the interior of the machine where Max was placed. The professor looks through a glass window into the time machine and notices that Max has disappeared.

September 11, 1965:

The professor has been working feverishly for two days to recover Max. Blume's nerves are on edge and he's working very nervously. After hours of work, the professor accidentally hits a knob on his control panel which in turn activates the machine once more.

The professor starts to turn the machine off until he notices a blurred, electrically charged image taking on form and shape. Thirty seconds later the charge has stopped, but the image still remains. Judging from the small size the professor assumes immediately that it is Max. But something is wrong. From the back view his body looks wider, more muscular.

He doesn't move. He just stands there with his back towards Professor Blume.

September 12, 1965:

After twenty-four hours, Max or whatever it is hasn't made a move at all. He just stands there like a stone statue.

Meanwhile, the professor is trying to find out what is wrong. "Why isn't he moving?" he asks himself. But just as the question came into his mind, Max turned and faced him. Professor Blume was in shock at the sight of the creature which was once Max.

His features had been changed completely: void of all hair, a protruding forehead and very thick eyebrows. His hands were the size of baseball mits but his fingers were like pencils, and only three on each hand! The color of his skin was sky blue. Holes remained where there used to be ears. His whole body was about as wide as a door, but the height hadn't changed. His eyes were a crystalline, prism color which emitted a rainbow of colored lights.

The professor let Max, or whatever it was, out of the machine, and it began to speak of its experiences through time as if hypnotized. He sounded much more intelligent when he talked, as if he were a professor of some kind himself. He said that he was from earth in the year 3226 from the city of Atlantis.

When the professor heard this, he questioned Max about Atlantis, which was a sunken city for over a million years. The being answered that the city was revived in the year 2000 by beings from outer space who were called Troyls. He said that he himself was half-human, half-Troyl. He also said that the professor must send him back or the Earth would suffer.

September 13, 1965:

Max, who says his name is really Maximal, informs the professor that his existence in this time can destroy the Earth, because his ancestor, Max, didn't change into Maximal, but was still on Earth somewhere. The time machine didn't complete its task. If two ancient relatives were to survive in the same time zone, the forces of nature would go wild. When Blume asked why this would happen, the answer was so complex that he found it hard to understand.

September 14, 1965:

Volcanic eruptions of a fantastic magnitude have occurred very suddenly, killing thousands in California and Hawaii.

September 15, 1965:

Hurricanes hit Tokyo, Mexico and New Jersey.

September 17, 1965:

Tornadoes are reported to have touched down in Chicago, Cuba, Detroit, and all of North America.

September 18, 1965:

Maximal Has predicted that if this doesn't stop, by October the whole Earth will be void of all life. So he and the professor work hard to repair the time machine.

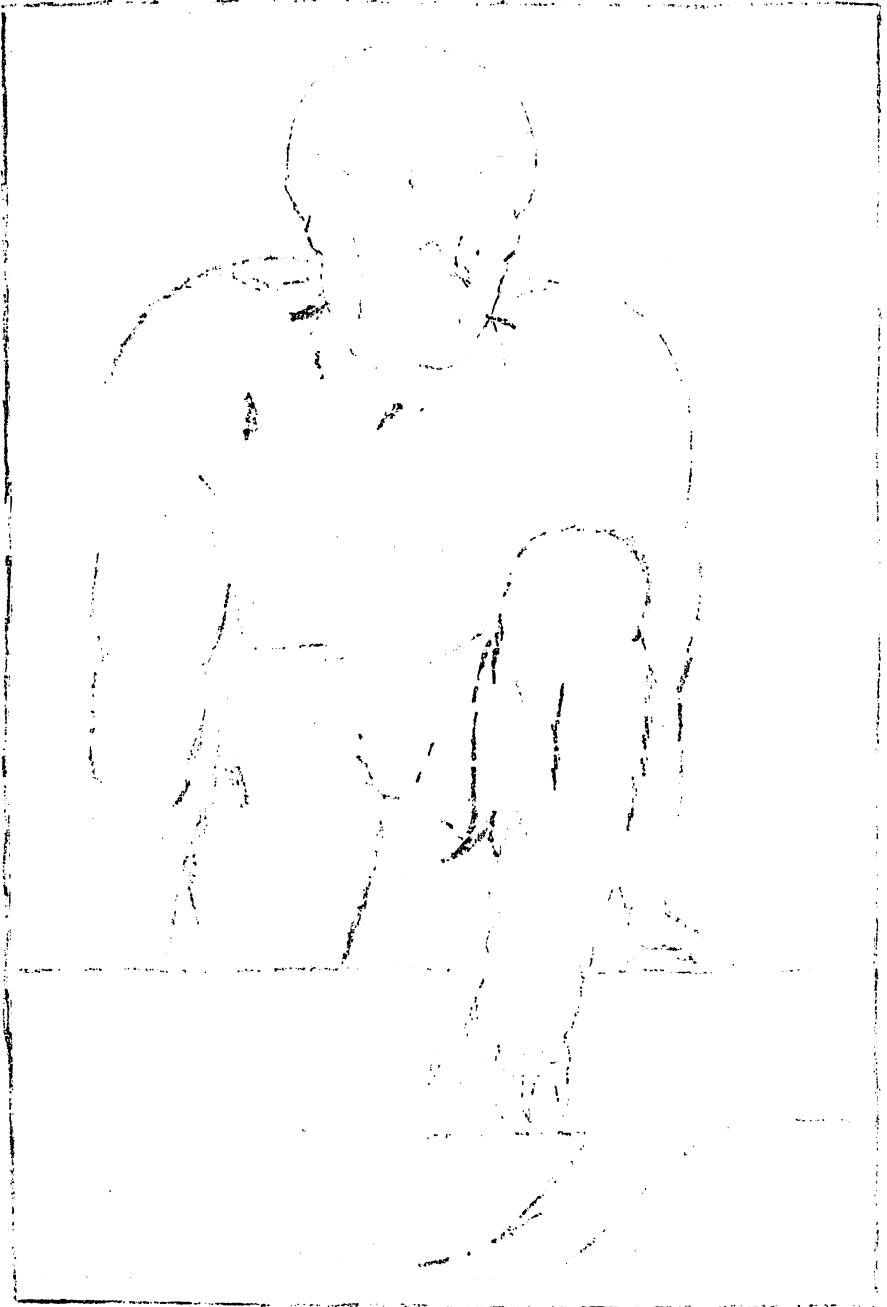
October 1, 1965:

Maximal is sent back to his own time.

October 2, 3226:

Something is wrong. Nothing moves in the city of Atlantis, or in any other place on Earth. Nothing is alive except Max from the twentieth century!! What Happened??!!

Preston Smart





# A STAR FELL

One day science professors all over the world predicted that a star was entering the solar system on a collision course with Earth. It was estimated that it would hit on late Sunday night or early Monday morning. As soon as this was announced the world panicked. Everyone began to run, forgetting that the star was going to hit the whole world.

Everyone ran except Professor Cronik who was busy in his laboratory working on an experiment that would protect him from the heat. He finished the special suit on Saturday evening, but didn't test it. Instead he placed it in a storeroom in the lower basement.

That Saturday night, people started going crazy.

On Sunday morning it started getting hot. The temperature was about 90°, and rising. By 12 noon the temperature had climbed to 103°, and still rising. Then at 1:23 PM it hit, sooner than the scientists had predicted.

Most of the world was in flames. Trees, grass, houses and buildings were on fire. People were dying by the millions. Gas stations exploded causing miles and miles of land to be destroyed. Cars were being blown to pieces, and the people in them were blown into tiny bits of burnt flesh.

There was no place to go. Even the water was boiling hot. There was a mass of earthquakes causing more explosions. Dogs and cats and even rats were lying on the streets and sidewalks dead. The temperature was up to 193°, and then there was a huge explosion. It was all over.

After four or five hours the Professor awoke under a pile of bricks and wood. He got up and saw that he was in the lower basement. Cronik looked for a way out, and found one. He ran and got his special suit. After putting it on as fast as he could, he hurried up what was once a staircase. He stepped on the remains of the stairs as carefully as he could and as he ascended he saw that the entire lab had been destroyed.

Carefully he went out onto the street. When he was completely outside the ruins of his lab, he started moving very slowly. In a few minutes he realized that his experiment was a success: no heat was entering his suit.

He walked down the street and looking down, he noticed deep cracks in the roads and sidewalks. He saw all the dead people and animals, and started to get scared. He looked at a building, the only one left standing, and saw the bricks glowing brightly. He picked up a long tree limb and touched the building. The stick burned to ashes.

This frightened Cronik. He began to run. He ran and ran until he could run no more, then collapsed.

He wandered in a daze for hours until he realized that he was alone. Then loneliness set in, and he wondered if there were any other people left alive. He went searching to see if any others had survived.

His search lasted for eight months, and he found no one. He sustained himself with food capsules that he took from his lab with him. All he needed was one pill every three days and he could survive easily.

After two and one-half years time, Cronik began to talk to himself. At the beginning of his third year alone, he was conversing with the trees, plants and flowers which had begun to grow when the earth cooled. And he talked to statues. By the end of the third year, he was stark raving mad.

With his food capsules gone, he had no energy to do anything. He collapsed on the ground and laid there. Strangely enough, after awhile he started to play in the dirt. With his finger he wrote:

A Star Fell

and he died.

David Richard



# CONFERENCE ROOM

In a mid-Manhattan conference room there was a table with nine chairs around it. Six of those chairs were occupied. At the head of this table sat a man; to his left sat two women, three men were seated on his right. For all appearances this could have been one of a hundred or so business conferences being held all over Manhattan, except for what was going to be discussed there.

The man at the head of the table stood, and started to speak:

"My fellow Centaurians, as you know we came to this planet by accident. Our spacecraft was severely damaged in this system's asteroid belt, but luckily we made it safely to Earth.

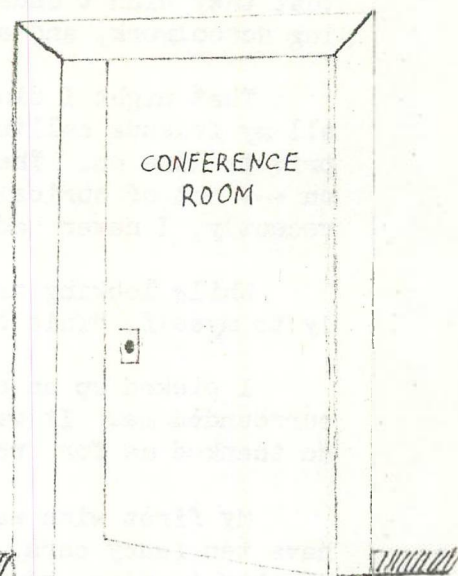
"Our ship was more damaged than we thought, which we found out after we landed. Our reactor cooling system was destroyed beyond repair, making the reactor core melt down. Fortunately, the crew had enough time to get all the colonists out of cryogenic storage, all one hundred of them. The ship became highly radioactive when the reactor core melted down, and was therefore a total loss.

"This left us marooned on the planet which we came to know as Earth. Those one-hundred colonists and crew slowly integrated themselves into various earth societies and cultures. Our ancestors, fearing that our Centaurian blood would be diluted by Terran blood, set up a law against interracial intercourse. This law has not been violated for many years, since we first landed. And the purpose of this council is to enforce that law.

"Today I bring before you a violation of that law. The original violator is dead, but his half-breed grandson is still alive and poses a threat. He has found some papers left for him by his grandfather who was our sociologist. With this knowledge he can make much trouble for us.

"While this man was a minor figure in society, he posed no threat. Now, as the highest political figure, he can destroy us all. The law demands that he must die.

"Let us now make plans to assassinate John F. Kennedy."



Michael Seldon

# A FOOLISH WISH

One dark and stormy night I was sitting alone in my house. Every friend I knew kept calling me on the phone, bothering me about homework that they didn't understand. You see, I was very smart when it came to doing schoolwork, and everybody knew it.

That night I did want to be alone, and since I was being bothered by all my friends calling, I took the phone off the hook, leaving the family's private line on. Then I went into the basement without any particular reason --- out of curiosity, I suppose. Since we had just moved to this house recently, I never had the chance to explore it completely.

While looking around, I discovered an Arabian lamp. I thought foolishly to myself, "This lamp couldn't be magic, could it?"

I picked up an old rag and wiped it off. Seconds later smoke and dust surrounded me. It was coming from the lamp. Suddenly a real Genie appeared. He thanked me for freeing him, and he said that I could have three wishes.

My first wish was to have all the money in the world. My second was to have ten fancy cars. Before I could finish my third wish, the private phone started to ring. In anger, I wished that I was the only person in the world. All my wishes came true.

I looked out the basement window and saw ten fancy cars. Piles and piles of money were stacked in front of the house. And the phone had stopped ringing. I turned around to thank the Genie, but he was gone. As a matter of fact, everyone was gone. I thought about that third wish, and then regretted making it.

I started to panic and ran. In my mad flight I tripped over an old steel chest and fell in an awkward position, breaking both my legs. I lay there in pain. There was no way for me to get help since I was the only one around. I didn't have a chance.

Days later I realized that I was suffering from more than pain: I was starving. I could not take that suffering. I knew that something had to be done. There was a sharp piece of metal within reach. And I thought of killing myself.

Vincent Mosley





# VAMPIRE

A long time ago, back when Vampires were only legends (so they thought), and the people spoke of them as spirits of evil, they didn't know how right they were.

Stupid mortals, I thought to myself. They never tied into the fact that the killings started two nights after I, Sir Mission Quarter, came into this drab little town. They'll never suspect me. I'm not, ahem, the killing type. But I've already drank the blood of six beautiful women. Tonight will be the seventh. The street is dark, but I'll just stand in this alley until one of the ladies passes by. Ah, here comes one.

As she approached, my adrenaline started flowing faster and faster. Then I jumped. The short scream was heard by no one, so I hungrily lapped up the



I walked into the cave hoping to find shelter from the townspeople...

blood as it oozed from the small holes I had made with my fangs. Changing form, I flew to a nearby rooftop and watched as an old drunk came stumbling down the street. He saw the pale-white body empty of blood and gave a yell like that of a sick cow.

I chuckled under my blood-scented breath as men streamed from the tavern. What fools they be! I may live here till the female populus dies.

Gorged with blood, I made my way back to my small but adequate house, proceeded down the door in the floor and laid in my coffin. Daybreak was soon to come.

At seven o'clock in the evening I raised my heavy eyelids and lifted my weary body out of my coffin. The pain from the emptiness of my stomach was almost too much to bear. I must find someone before I become too weak.

Walking in the shadows I made my way to the alley again. Some people had just come out of the tavern, a man and a woman. I felt too weak to handle a man, so I pressed my body against the cold smooth wall. They passed without seeing.

I put my head out again to watch the tavern. The door opened and a beautiful blonde came out wearing hot pants and a short top. As she walked I could hear her giggling to herself. I lunged at her, but as I did the man and woman who had passed me earlier came back around the corner. The woman screamed, and the man grabbed me. I spun and caught him by the neck, feeling his soft bones crunching in my grip.

Many people were coming out of the tavern now, and running after me. I started to run, weak from the fight. A few men were right behind me, so I didn't dare go to my house. Suddenly I remembered the cave. I had heard about it while seeking other sorts of amusements.

It was funny though. So many people talked about the cave. And every time, the exact location was mentioned.

No time for that now! I had to lose them in the rocks and hills. After about ten minutes of climbing I found the cave entrance. My eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness of the interior. I followed the passageway through several sharp turns, then came to a large cavern lit up by torches. I turned back because I knew someone was there. As I dashed towards the entrance, men started pouring in. I heard laughter from behind me. There were men all around smiling with that death-look in their eyes.


Stupid mortals!! You tricked me!!!

Jamie Collins



One Saturday morning while home from Cranbrook for the weekend, I woke up alone. I didn't see my brother in his bed, so I went downstairs to see if he was watching TV, but he wasn't. In fact, no one was in the house. I looked outside to see if the car was gone, but it was still there. I started getting scared. I went next door to see if my neighbor Elliott was there. I knocked and knocked, but nobody answered. I ran up to Hamilton Avenue to see if I could find anybody, but no one was in sight. Then I remembered last night's newscast.

# THE LAST SURVIVORS



The newsman said that there was a chance of a radioactive storm hitting earth from outer space. It must have disintegrated everybody but me! At first I started crying about my family, but I realized there was nothing I could do, so I stopped.

I ran back down the street to my house. I got my father's .38 caliber and the keys to our station-wagon. Starting the car I drove into Detroit to see if any people were still alive.

As I was driving down Woodward, I saw a girl I knew named Dawana crying on the corner of her street. I drove over to the corner and got out. She ran to me and started crying louder, saying that her whole family and all her neighbors were gone. I told her that the same thing had happened to me, and that there was nothing we could do. She soon stopped crying.

I parked my car on her street and we got the keys to her brother's '76 Trans-Am. We drove all day looking for other people, but didn't find anyone. We even tried sending messages on the CB, but received no answers. I knew then that we were the last survivors.

We went back to her place to get some provisions, then set out for the country. We set up housekeeping in an old farmhouse, and lived for about a year in peace, but in loneliness. Then one day when I came home from getting more provisions from a food warehouse, I found Dawana's body in the backyard mauled to death. From the tracks nearby, I realized it was Big-Foot, the mad rapist of Detroit.

I got so mad that I grabbed my hunting gun to go after him. As I was going out the front door, there he was, standing on the steps. When he turned around, I blew one of his legs off. He fell to the ground. As I was cocking the gun he reached over and ripped my right arm off. I reacted quickly, shooting his head off. As I bled to death, I realized that this was the end of the last survivors.

Mike Parizon

# WITHIN THE SHELLS

One day, a gardener by the name of Charles Benton was digging around the mansion where he worked. His shovel struck struck something hard. Clearing away the excess dirt, he came upon what looked like little egg-shaped rocks made of marble. He quickly picked one up to examine it, for he had never seen such smooth and beautiful rocks piled together in all his years of gardening.

As Mr. Benton was examining the rocks, he heard one of the watch-dogs squeal in pain. He quickly rushed over to the fence where the dog had been patrolling and found him lying there torn to pieces!

Benton didn't know what to do. Just before he decided to run off and get his boss, he saw one of those beautiful, shiney, red rocks lying right beside the mutilated animal. There was only one thing different from this one than all the others: it was cracked open. It was hollow inside. And there by the shell were tiny footprints leading away into the underbrush.

Mr. Benton turned to run toward the mansion. He stopped in his tracks. There he stood face-to-face with a creature not quite man nor insect, but a little of both. The thing stood about six inches off the ground, and had long spider-like legs ending in human feet, and a human head.

As he was turning to run, Benton heard a tiny voice say, "Why have you disturbed us? We have done nothing to disturb you or your people in any way, but you had to dig us out of our peaceful sleep into your cruel world. Now your people must pay."

The creature let out a sharp squeal. All of a sudden hundreds of them started coming up from the ground, clinging to the first thing that they came into contact with.

For some strange reason the creatures didn't bother Mr. Benton, but just squealed and howled for awhile, then scattered into the underbrush. That night while everybody was in bed in the big mansion, they started to hear strange noises. They sounded like little voices within the woodworks. No one said anything about the noises until one of the night maids was just about to retire to her quarters. She saw one of the creatures and let out a loud scream.

Everyone rushed out of their rooms to see what was going on. The people stopped and stared in astonishment. The maid was backing into the corner of her room, pursued by one of the creatures from within the shells.

The creature was saying: "Why couldn't you have left us alone? Now you must die. Die!! You hear me! DIE!!!"

One man grabbed a shotgun and fired at the ugly thing. The bullet merely bounced off some invisible shield inches from the creature's body, and the ricochete wounded one of the other butlers.



The thing then started saying, "Now you must pay!!!"

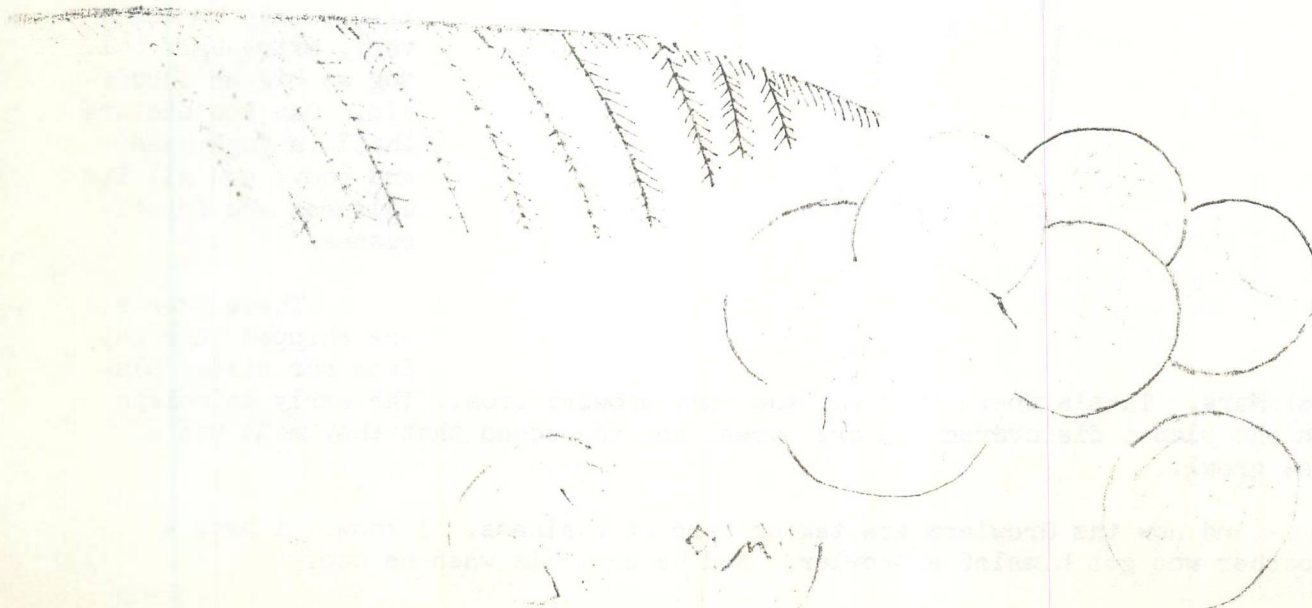
It squealed and made all sorts of squeaks and noises, and called forth hundreds more of his own kind. They were coming through the windows, through the doors, out of the closets and mouseholes, out of the woodwork. Everyone started to scream, and they headed for the nearest way out of there, any exit they could find.

They soon found out that it was impossible to escape the deadly traps that were set for them by the creatures. Every way out of the mansion was blocked by hundreds of the little varments eagerly waiting out there. All night long the only thing heard was the sound of people screaming in pain.

The morning found little children playing around the mansion. They found the shiney red rocks and began to play marbles with the pretty stones, unaware of what was sleeping within the shells.

Mr. Benton convinced himself that it was all a dream. But he was never seen around that mansion again. He left and took employment elsewhere, never bothering to check back as to what happened to his former employer. And he never missed a night sleeping with a shotgun in one hand, a can of RAID in the other ever since that day.

Alfonz Parker



It was the year 2300. It was the year that teachers had real pets. You probably don't know what I mean, but it happened like this.

The schools became worse. Discipline was more of a problem, and it was difficult to maintain an atmosphere of learning. The teacher's pet, the one of our ancestors' days, and the one of last year was the one who pointed out the wrong-doings of others. They were given special treatment, and protection by the teachers and school officials. They had to keep a keep a high grade average in order to stay a teacher's pet.

But the students began to harrass the teacher's pets so much that they could not do their jobs and keep getting all A's. So this year the teachers got a new pet. It was a lot more than just an ordinary pet, more like a ferocious animal. It was called a Growler, and this particular Growler's name was Devil.

Devil looked like this: he was a very, extra-ugly bull dog as big as a buffalo. Can you picture that? a huge head and body, and all its ugliness and ferociousness?

These beasts are shipped in right from our sister planet Mars. That's where they got the name Growler from. The early colonists on the planet discovered the creatures, and the sound that they made was a low growl.

And now the Growlers are taking care of business. I know. I have a teacher who got himself a Growler. And he uses him when he can.



For example: one sunny day in class a dude with this big head named Willie Walker who is the best known wrong-doer in our school starts to make trouble as usual. The teacher warns Willie to stop playing around, but he doesn't. Right then and there the Growler attacks Willie and eats him whole, big head and all. Now that's what's happening to all the hard heady kids.

One day, Naughty Ned was fooling around like he usually does, and Devil attacked him. But Ned ran behind a chair, picked it up, and threw it at the Growler. Devil then ate the chair, and stopped to lick his chops. He decided that he liked the chair better than naughty little boys, so Devil went around the room eating up all the chairs.

Then he ate all the desks.

Then he ate the teacher's desk. Soon the room was completely empty of all furniture, and the Growler started on the walls.

That's when the National School Council decided to get rid of the Growlers. The school budget couldn't afford to replace chairs, desks, walls and entire school buildings. So they sent all the Growlers back to Mars, along with the hard heady and naughty kids.

You see, we came out good on this deal. Now we can really learn something in school.

Speaking of school, see you later. Got to get there on time.

...

Or do I?

Christopher Loving



# JOE COOL IN SPACE

Wooooo. What's that strange noise? A spaceship. --- Is it one of ours?  
 My arms and legs are broken. How will they know I'm Joe Cool, instead of  
 Ted, or Alice, or Spocktoria? --- By the way, where are they? Oh, I know;  
 they've been disintegrated.  
 How will I live?  
 Hey! The spaceship is coming closer and closer. What's this light doing?  
 It's --- it's lifting me up. I'll close my eyes so I won't know how I'm going  
 to die.

I fell asleep. Maybe it was all a dream. --- Hey, this is not my ship.  
 Where am I? --- Hey now, fine foxy woman just walked in.  
 \*Hey baby, what's your name? My name is Joe.\*  
 "Excuse me, Mr. Joe. My name is Tabica; I'm an alien and I personally  
 don't think you can hang it well."  
 \*Well, you know you can take it from Joe and blow the bone.\*  
 "Excuse me, Mr. Joe. But I am not familiar with that term. I shall have  
 to give it to the computer for analysis."  
 \*Well you just do that, Tabica.\*

Here she comes again.  
 "Oh Mr. Joe, you are certainly a nasty man. I will do no such thing.  
 Mr. Joe, if you keep acting up we are not going to put you together right."  
 \*Hey Tabica, what are you doing with that mask. I was just kidding. Get  
 that mask off my face. Hey!! STOP\* Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

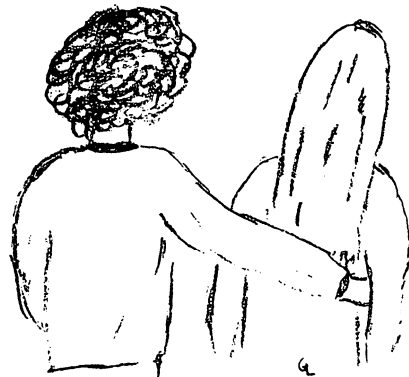
Oh, if I ever get well, I'm going to dog that nurse. --- Hey, I can move  
 my arms and my legs. I wish that they would remove these straps. Tabica just  
 came in.

\*Take off these straps, Tabica.\*  
 "Remove them yourself."  
 \*It won't work, but for you I'll try anything. Hey, they broke easily,  
 and I did it.\*  
 "Of course you did, Joe. You live on earth and we heard a rumor that all  
 Earthmen were as strong as Hercules. So we put you back together that way."  
 \*Am I dreaming?\*

"Joe, we would also like to do a study on humans and their favorite and  
 most strenuous exercises."  
 \*Well, Tabica, I'll need your help. This first exercise is called 'making  
 out'. All I need is a room with a bed, and it has to be dark. I will only  
 need the lights once.\*  
 "Here's your room, Joe."  
 \*Come into my office, Tabica.\*

"Joe, that was exciting, but why am I so sore?"  
 \*Because, Tabica, you just can't hang it well!\*  
 HaHaHaHaHa!  
 "Will you stay with me, Joe?"  
 \*Naturally, I've got more exercises to show you.\*

LAURENCE BRAYSON



# A STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

It is a very dark and dismal day in the year 1999, just after World War Three. The world is in a very dangerous state. People lie dying everywhere.

I am one of the remaining survivors, and I am writing this as a record in case something happens to me. If someone in the future should find this, they will know what had happened to us.

January eighteenth was a very cheerful night, but before it was over, I would be forever haunted by the things that had happened. The Christmas Holiday feeling had continued, and everyone was home relaxing and feeling merry. Outside everything was quiet.

On this night of joy, I, John K. Wills, a pilot in the Space Force, and Dr. Daimon were playing a game of pool down in the cellar. It was very close and I was about to clinch the game with an easy corner shot when Nurse Gail Freeman came down the stairs. I didn't see her, and as I took careful aim she hollared out, "Hi, you guys. Anything new?"

Of course I was furious, but when choosing between a beautiful woman and a game of pool, you know that pool would lose. So I quickly forgave her. Dr. Daimon quickly but surely sunk the winning ball into the hole, and said, "You lost, you old son-of-a-grave-snatcher."

"Big deal," I retorted. "That's the only you've won."

"You sure are a sore loser," Gail said smiling.

Chuckling, I replied, "Well I didn't take the game really seriously."

Doctor Daimon said, "You old walrus, you play like a ten-year-old."

I wasn't really angry since we argued like this all the time, but I couldn't resist making the next crack: "It's better than playing like your mother."

Feigning anger and pretending to pout, Daimon replied, "You better keep my mother out of this."

"What are you going to do?"

"Just say something else and I'll show you."

"Christmas candles burning bright, like your mother in the night."

In step with our usual routine, Dr. Daimon came at me with raised fists. After a couple minutes of fake punches and sparring, Gail interrupted us and told us to make up and put the pool balls away, or she would not talk to us again.

I said, "You wouldn't."

"I most certainly would not speak to either of you unless you stop and make up immediately," she replied.

Daimon and I grinned at each other, but as we moved to shake hands, there was a huge explosion. As the floor heaved, I was thrown against the wall and was knocked unconscious.

I woke up feeling pain everywhere in my body. Through careful experimentation I found that nothing had been broken. I pushed some debris off me and

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went to see if Gail and Daimon were still alive. I looked around for them, but I couldn't see them among all the wreckage. I began to get frantic. Suddenly I heard someone groan, or I thought I did. I called out to Gail and Daimon, but nobody answered me. I began to sink deeper and deeper into sorrow and depression. Again I heard a sound. It sounded like voices, calling for me. At first I didn't answer. I didn't think that my friends were still alive and that my minds was playing tricks on me.

Then I heard my name clearly. It was Gail. At once I asked where they were, and found them in the corner. I jumped for joy, but Daimon said, "You idiot, don't jump. The whole house might come down on top of us."

I answered curtly, "Then let's get out of here."

When we finally climbed out of that cellar, we saw to our horror that everything was in ruins. There was an odor of fetid flesh that made me sick to my stomach. I don't know how long Dr. Daimon, Gail and I were unconscious, but it had to have been several months, for vegetation had gone wild. Our old civilization looked like a jungle. Dr. Daimon thought that the reason we had survived was that the container of suspended-animation gas he was experimenting with had cracked in the explosion, and prevented us from dying and aging while in the cellar.

Now all we had to do was survive.

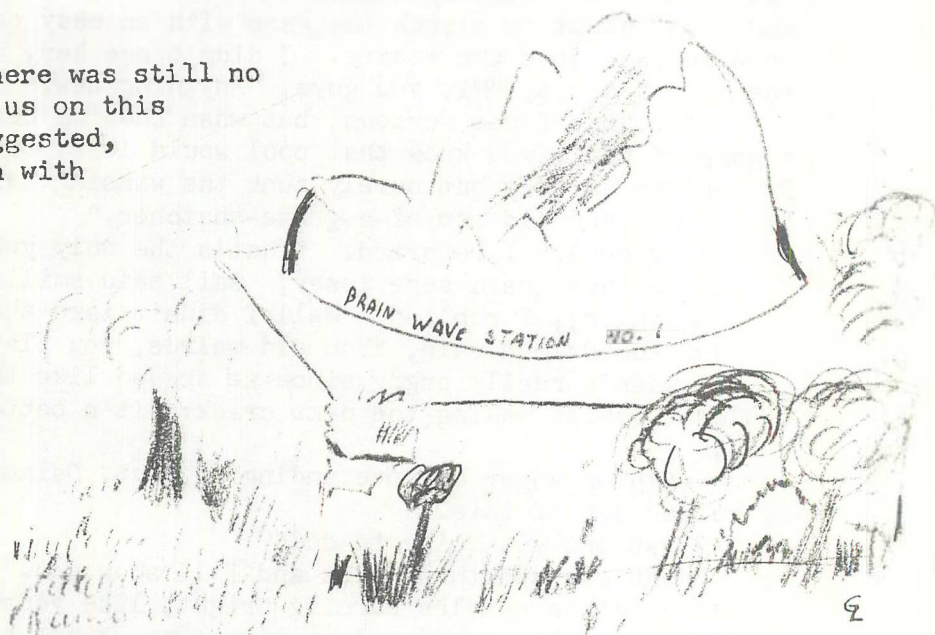
A year passed, and there was still no sign of human life except us on this planet. Doctor Daimon suggested, "Why don't we get in touch with Alpha?"

I replied, "It's worth a try, but if the blast was so bad as to wipe out human life and cause this much destruction, the chances of finding operational communicating equipment would be about a billion to one."

"Even that one can bring hope," Gail commented.

At once we started out for one of the BrainWave Stations. Number One, the first one built was only a couple hundred miles away. Everything was going fine until we got within two blocks of the station. There was still the stench of rotting bodies, and it stank so bad that we had to wrap cloths about our faces so that we could breathe.

When we finally managed to get into the building our hearts sank like a rock, for the interior of the station was so badly damaged that it would be unlikely that a brainwave machine would still be intact. We searched anyway.





For hours we looked through the station until finally an excited Gail Freeman cried, "Here it is!!"

It was one giant miracle that the machine was still together, and it was still running automatically. Being familiar with the machine, I was the first one to call Alpha. It took only a half hour of straining and sweating to get contact with them.

At that very moment on Alpha a starman named Jeff Collins was on duty. He was tinkering with the machinery he suddenly heard voices from the speaker saying, "This is BrainWave Station Number One. Do you read me, Alpha."

Excitedly Jeff took his seat at the machine and answered, "Alpha reading you loud and clear. Who is this?"

He heard shouts of joy from the other end. At first he thought someone was playing a trick on him, but John Wills came back, "This isn't a joke or anything like that. Please send a ship to pick us up. Our position is Minute Twelve Minus."

Jeff Collins immediately called Major Mark Wills. The Major was not in a very good mood, so when he approached Collins he shouted, "You had better have a good explanation."

Jeff Collins replied, "You may not believe this, sir, but there are people still alive on Earth."

Astonished, Major Wills called Central Control to get permission to send a rescue party to Earth. For a couple hours the staff and the President discussed the problem until they finally reached a decision. A note saying "Permission Granted" was sent to the Major.

At once Major Wills relayed the message to Jeff Collins. "Tell them that we are sending out four Eagle-Hawks to pick them up. They should be there in about five weeks."

When I finished the transmission, I was aware of Dr. Daimon and Gail shouting for me to look out. Instinctively I spun out of my chair. As I looked back over my shoulder, I saw a mind-staggering horror. A mutated mishapened human figure came lunging at me. I ducked, and it just grazed my shoulder with its claws. The blood began to seep from the wound.

The mutation poised for a second attack. I thought I was finished when out of the corner of my eye I spotted a laser pistol. I jumped for the laser and caught the creature in mid-jump. It fell to the floor smouldering.

Suddenly Gail screamed. Another mutant came bounding across the floor. I opened fire on this monster, whose head reminded me of a hawk, and its pain-wracked form went away screaming.

I ran over to my friends, cautiously looking around for any more of the monsters. Then, looking at the laser, I said, "It's very strange that we would find a working laser around. Practically everything was destroyed in the blast."

Dr. Daimon replied, "It is strange, but the BrainWave Machine wasn't destroyed either. And, someone else might be alive."

"That's impossible," I cried. "If there were truly someone else alive, they would have tried to use this machine, or another one. And they certainly would not have left a laser pistol lying around."

"Well, we won't know until we find him," Gail commented.

"If he is still alive," I replied.

The next morning dawned clear, and we set out for the place we had called home these past months. Everything seemed fine, until we had walked five

blocks. Right in the middle of the street lay a dead body, mutilated beyond recognition. He was probably the one who had kept the BrainWave machine going. Sadly we walked on. Our hopes of actually finding other people crumbled again. Daimon conjectured that the mutations were either poor humans who had been caught in the radiation blasts, or evolved animals. In either case, they were dangerous, and we had to take extreme precautions from then on.

Eventually we arrived at "home", and found that it had been ransacked. Footprints indicated that the deed was done by no human being. So we set out at a slow pace, searching for a place to live until the ships would arrive. A half-destroyed farmhouse became our base of operations. After much struggle and a lot of hard work we managed to set up enough of a shelter to keep us safe and warm until the ships came. I feared that we might perish before then, for winter was fast approaching, and the nights were extremely cold.

Food was not that much of a problem, but fresh meat was. One morning Dr. Daimon and I set out to hunt for some small game. It took longer than we had expected to make one kill, and that came about when we saw two gigantic beasts fight and kill each other. We cut a portion of one up and carried the meat back to the farmhouse.

When we got there, we found that the mutants had broken into our shelter and had killed Gail. I was enraged. I wanted to go out and kill every mutant I could find. But I didn't have to do that. As we buried Gail, we heard the mutants returning. They came in such numbers that we could not fight them off. Our only hope lay in flight.

We ran, dodging in and out of thickets and bushes, among trees and saplings. As Daimon ran through one set of bushes, I heard a horrifying scream. I knew that the mutants had caught him. He had fallen into one of their pits and impaled himself on the sharpened stakes on the bottom.

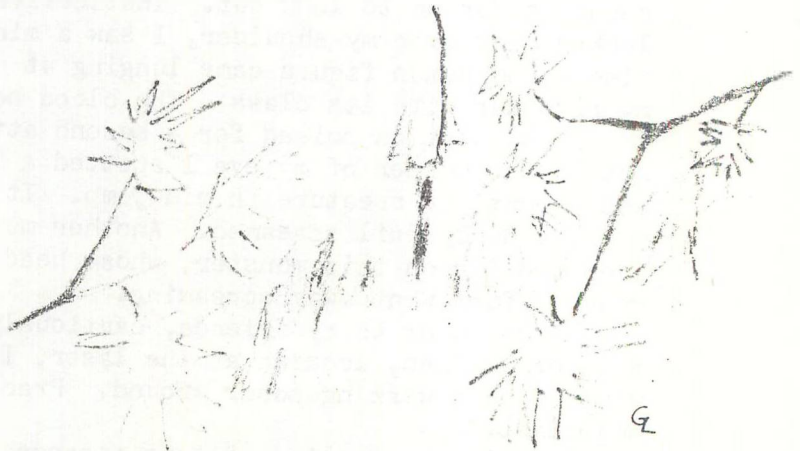
I heard the mutants close behind me. I had no time to mourn for Daimon. I was too tired to run any more, so I had to find a place to hide. Quickly I climbed up the tree overhanging the trap. They never thought to look for me there as they dragged Daimon's body out of the pit.

Fortunately they left him there, thinking that he was dead. After they left, I climbed down to see if by some slim chance he was still alive. He was, but just barely. I wrapped strips of my shirt around his wounds and carried him back to the shelter.

Day after day, Daimon and I managed to avoid the mutants. Although his wounds hampered him, Daimon managed quite well. The mutants didn't attack in such large numbers that the laser couldn't ward them off.

Finally the time was near for the ships to arrive. We managed to walk to the landing place, the place I had told them we were, and we didn't have long to wait before we saw the ships landing. We both shouted with joy.

Unfortunately, we made so much noise that more than one group of mutants heard us. They came charging at us in a huge group. We ran as best we could





towards the landing ships. As we burst into the clearing, the mutants were right on our tails. Shoving Daimon on ahead of me, I whirled and fired my laser at the creatures. The first couple fell right at my feet, and the others hung back slightly, gathering their courage. As I turned to run after Daimon, the mutants charged again.

I thought bitterly that this was the end of us when from the open hatches of the ships men started to fire their lasers over our heads and at the attacking mutants. The forces of the Starmen quickly drove them away.

After quick introduction were made, we went inside the ship to prepare for blast-off. When I entered the ship I saw to my astonishment someone whom I thought had died in the blast. I shouted, "Mark, you old so and so. Where have you been hibernating?"

Major Mark Wills was delighted to know that his brother was still alive. He told me that immediately after the first bombs were dropped, the Space Force started to evacuate as many people as possible.

I asked, "But how did you manage to get half the Earth's population to Alpha?"

"It wasn't easy," my brother replied, "but we did do it."

I told him about Gail, and he expressed his sorrow. Then I introduced him to Dr. Daimon who was being treated for his wounds. As they shook hands I said, "He's a very dear friend. We've been through a lot together."

Daimon grinned and said, "Yeah, but we both survived without killing each other."

From out in space I looked at the Earth on the viewscreen. I thought bitterly of how man, with all his knowledge, had destroyed her. Tearfully I whispered, "Good dear Earth, I shall never forget you."

Pilot John Wills  
US Space Force

What a short life we live,  
That knowledge should deceive us  
Of a wondering dream.

Stephen Manuel



